

**Washington, DC** – Continuing her leadership on investigating the long-term effects of head injuries, Congresswoman Linda T. Sánchez today sent a letter to House Judiciary Chairman Lamar Smith asking him to hold full Committee hearings on legal issues stemming from head injuries in professional sports.

**“For far too long, head injuries have been ignored and the long-term effects swept under the rug,”** Congresswoman Sánchez said. **“The hearings the Judiciary Committee held last Congress brought much needed attention to traumatic brain injuries in football, resulting in changes to brain injury guidelines on the professional, college and high school levels. However, football is not the only sport where athletes face health risks. I am hopeful new hearings will shine a light on health concerns in other sports, and encourage similar changes to protect athletes on all levels. We also need to know how well leagues are caring for athletes who have already sustained irreparable harm.”**

In 2007, Congresswoman Sánchez chaired a hearing of the House Judiciary Subcommittee on Commercial and Administrative Law to examine if the NFL’s player disability plan was adequately serving former players, many of whom suffer from chronic traumatic encephalopathy (CTE) as a result of multiple concussions. In the 111<sup>th</sup> Congress, Congresswoman Sánchez participated in multiple hearings regarding head injuries and football, and grilled NFL Commissioner Roger Goodell over the league’s concussion awareness campaign. These hearings resulted in greater public awareness and changes to how football teams address player concussions on all levels of play.

The full text of the letter is below.

March 24, 2011

Chairman Lamar Smith  
2138 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Smith,

I am writing to urge you to hold full Committee hearings on the legal issues related to head injuries in professional sports.

In the 111<sup>th</sup> Congress, the Judiciary Committee held several important hearings into the “Legal Issues Relating to Football Head Injuries.”

Those hearings brought public attention to the issue of traumatic brain injuries in sports, and resulted in positive and overdue changes to the brain injury guidelines governing professional, collegiate, and high school sports.

Since those hearings, media reports have shown that the incidence of head injuries youth, collegiate, professional, and retired athletes is greater than previously believed. Additionally, more information has come to light that this problem is not limited to football players, but almost all athletes – including hockey, lacrosse, and soccer players both male and female. Studies have also revealed that these injuries have a real effect on brain development as well as overall health.

It is clear that these head injuries have long been ignored, under-diagnosed and under-treated. While there have been some laudatory, voluntary steps by professional and amateur sports organizations, I believe it is appropriate for the Committee to return to this issue in light of new information.

Thank you for your consideration and I look forward to your convening of these hearings.

Sincerely,

Linda T. Sánchez  
Member of Congress